No. 33

A PRINCE IN ISRAEL FALLEN:

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN MEETING-HOUSE,

BALLYMONEY,

ON SABBATH, 18TH DECEMBER, 1864.

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

THE REV. WILLIAM J. STAVELY, D.D.,

BY

REV. ROBERT NEVIN,

LONDONDERRY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BELFAST:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JAMES JOHNSTON,
24, HIGH STREET.

C. AITCHISON, CASTLE PLACE; GEORGE PHILLIPS AND SONS, BRIDGE STREET. R. HAMILTON, DERRY; JOHN CUNNINGHAM, GLASGOW
A. GARDNER, PAISLEY.

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DISCOURSE, &c.

"And the King said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"—2 Sam. iii. 38.

Death is a universal leveller. With equal step he knocks at palace of the prince and cottage of the poor. The time and manner of his approach are indeed to us exceedingly uncertain and varied. Many are carried away in infancy or early youth, ere conscious existence has well begun. One languishes on a bed of sickness and suffering for months or years: another is cut down at a stroke, with awful suddenness. Some come prematurely to their end, while their frame is yet vigorous, and their bones full of marrow, by the red hand of violence or the black and stealthy hand of treachery, like him of whom David speaks in the text. Another, like him whose death we this day lament, has his life prolonged beyond the ordinary span allotted to humanity, and at length dies calmly and peacefully in his bed, through the natural and gradual exhaustion of the vital functions. But whether death come at one period of life or another, in one way or another, by the visitation of God, as we say, or through human instrumentality, or the operation of secondary causes that we can see and calculate on, all is disposed and arranged in the infinite wisdom of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. It is appointed unto all men once to die; and after death, the judgment. Our times are wholly in His hand. He has determined the bounds of our habitation. He has foreordained and so foreseen whatsoever comes to pass. And His hand is to be perceived and acknowledged in every event. Not only in the manner of his removal from earth, but in other important respects, did he of whom we would

speak this day differ from him of whom David spake the words of the text, presenting a contrast rather than a resemblance. Abner, the son of Ner, was a statesman and man of war, a military chief, conversant all his days with scenes of bloody strife. Our departed father was a peace-loving minister of the Gospel of peace; an ambassador of Him whose advent to earth was heralded by the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Chiefly in one point does the analogy hold:—Both were princes in Israel. I will be excused, therefore, from entering on any merely textual exposition. What I propose is, in the first place, to present a sketch of the life, labours, and character of the father so recently removed from us; secondly, to note some things which I consider noteworthy in the providence of God in regard to the removal from this world of His eminent servants; and lastly, to make some practical use of the subject.

I.—I am first, then, to present a sketch of the life and character of our deceased father. It is usual, on occasions like the present, to reserve such a sketch till towards the close. It is partly a matter of taste. I choose, in this instance, to put it in the foreground, as more in keeping with the nature and bearing of our text, and that we may have the life-lesson before us when I come to point the moral by subsequent remarks. Greatly would I have preferred that the task had been allotted to abler and more experienced hands. But called to it as I have been, I had no heart to refuse, or even to hesitate for a moment. I can say with the most unaffected sincerity, it is to me a labour of love. The life of a home minister of the Gospel, however eminent he may have been in many respects, however useful and blessed his labours, ordinarily presents few striking incidents adapted to be woven into the web of a sensational narrative. Nevertheless, the record is on high.

Doctor Stavely was born at Annsborough, in the County Down, near Belfast, on the 12th of October, 1780; so that at the time of his decease he had entered on his 85th year. His father, the Rev. William Stavely, was a remarkable

man in his day, known, respected, and honoured throughout the whole province of Ulster as a zealous and indefatigable preacher of a pure Gospel at a period when vital godliness was at a low ebb, when the Churches generally were in a state of spiritual torpor, when a Rationalistic heterodoxy abounded, and Scriptural orthodoxy was at a discount. I can well remember, though too young at the time to understand much more, his personal appearance, and the fire and energy which he threw into his proclamation of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Often have I listened with profound interest to persons older than myself descanting on his powerful exhibitions of the truth as it is in Jesus, and marked the kindling eye and suddenly animated manner, when the slightest reference was made to him—"the old hero," as I have heard him fondly styled. It is no marvel that such a man and his preaching should draw crowds of eager listeners wherever he officiated, and that was within wide limits, for the field was large, and Covenanted labourers were then comparatively few. In the home of such a father, Dr. Stavely enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a careful and prayerful training in the fear of the Lord; and how greatly he profited by it, there is the clearest and most abundant evidence to show. The memorandum is extant under his own hand in which he gratefully records the fact that even in early life he had been kept from falling before the temptations to which youth is often exposed, and ascribes it under the blessing of God to the agency indicated. "While prosecuting my academical studies," he writes, "I shunned the thronged paths of vice. This I did, not from the dictates of reason, but from my early religious education, to which I owe many obligations." After receiving thorough preparatory school instruction under various masters, he entered the University of Glasgow, in 1797, when barely seventeen years of age. For four sessions he continued his studies in that ancient seat of learning with great earnestness and assiduity, and with such success that he carried off the highest honours in the

department of the stricter sciences. This was a line for which his tastes and strong natural talents pre-eminently fitted him, and in which, had he pursued it, had not God called him to other work, he would doubtless have attained the highest position. Having completed his academical and theological studies, he was, towards the close of the year 1802, licensed to preach the Gospel. Such was his popularity as a preacher that he soon had three calls from as many different congregations. He accepted that from Dervock, and was ordained there on the 5th of Sept., 1804. It thus appears that at the close of his life he had entered on the sixty-first year of his ministry. Of his labours during those sixty busy years, what need that I say much? Are they not written on the memory and heart, and I trust in the life and conduct also, of an intelligent, affectionate, and grateful people? His charge was scattered over a wide district of country, extending, as I calculate, twenty miles in one direction by nearly fifteen in another. This rendered his work arduous. But, blessed all his life with a healthy and vigorous constitution, the calls of duty ever found him at his post, instructing the young, comforting the mourners, ministering by the bed-side of the sick and dying, familiarly exhorting all in his house-to-house visitations. In 1832, the congregation had so increased under his ministry that it was found expedient to divide it into two. This commodious and neat house of worship in which we are now assembled had then been erected, chiefly through his zeal and energy in collecting the necessary funds. Kilraughts was constituted one congregation. Dervock and Ballymoney the other. Both invited him, and on equal terms, to remain with them as their pastor. He elected to abide by Dervock and Ballymoney, where his labours were continued to the end. In 1839, the degree of Doctor in Divinity was conferred upon him by the Western University of Pennsylvania; and if such academical honours were always as well and worthily bestowed, there would be no reason to complain of their distribution. It could not be expected that a life so pro-

tracted should be spent without an experience of some of those manifold trials which fall to the lot of man in this present evil world. Those who enter the Zion above have generally come out of great tribulation. Our revered father was no exception. In 1834, he saw his first born, while yet in the bloom of his early manhood, after a brief illness, laid in the narrow house appointed for all living. Such a blow must always be severely felt. How keenly it descended upon his tender and affectionate nature, with what anguish it wrung his heart, many among us can well recollect. In 1848, the partner of his life, the sharer of his joys and sorrows, a lady who bore a strong resemblance to himself in many of the salient points of character, whose accomplishments and grace of manner, whose matronly dignity and calm Christian deportment, whose affectionate interest in what affected the welfare of others, attracted the admiration and love of all who had the privilege of her acquaintance, was taken from his side.* Many other trials there were, of various kinds, of which I cannot now speak particularly. I have no doubt they were sanctified to him, and thus he was the better fitted, taught in the school of personal experience, for sympathizing with others in their sorrows, weeping with those that wept, and ministering appropriate consolation. In 1860, his youngest son, to whom he was much attached, who was possessed of many sterling and estimable qualities, who had already made himself useful in the Church, and gave promise of still greater usefulness, was, after an illness of very short duration, carried to the grave. In him the last prop and solace of his earthly home was taken away; for, by this time, his other surviving children were scattered and in homes of their own. About two years previous to this, owing to the growing infirmities of age, it was found expedient that he should desist from the discharge of public official duties. Doubtless this stroke contributed to hasten the progress of his decline. Left thus lonely, it was deemed

* Her maiden name was Jane Adams, youngest daughter of John Adams, Esq., of Chequer Hall, in County Antrim.

advisable that he should be removed to the house of his youngest daughter,* where it will be consolatory to his friends at a distance to know that he had the advantage of all that the most devoted filial solicitude, and all that medical skill, always at hand, could do, in watching over him, tending him, smoothing the remainder of his path, and sustaining the ultimate footsteps of his earthly pilgrimage. Till within a week of his decease, his bodily health was tolerably good, and he was able to move about. Then the descent was rapid, and on Sabbath evening, the 4th of the present month, he calmly and peacefully fell asleep in Jesus.

When I would attempt a delineation of the CHARACTER of our beloved father, as a man, a Christian, and a minister of the Word, I approach a part of my theme of greater difficulty and delicacy. We have, no doubt, here a noble subject for a moral portraiture. May it not be marred in the hands of an incompetent artist! Dr. Stavely was tall in stature, robust, and well-proportioned, altogether a man of commanding presence. Grave and dignified in aspect and demeanour, blameless in the truthfulness and integrity of his life and conduct, those who knew him best would have been shocked and indignant at the very idea of connecting any thing little, mean, or frivolous with his name. His very presence was an effectual check and restraint on every approach to unbecoming levity on the part of others. Yet in admirable combination with this dignity was the affability, the kindliness, the geniality of his nature. Easily accessible to all, he knew well how to suit himself to every capacity, at home alike with the sage philosopher and the little child. His manners were cast in the mould of true politeness. His conversational powers were of the highest order. Drawing from the rich stores of his cultivated mind that which his refined taste and delicacy of judgment enabled him to set off to the best advantage, he was fitted to take his place in any circle of society, and shine brilliantly there. In these respects, indeed, he was

* The wife of Dr. Quintin Moore, of Lavan Cottage, parish of Loughguile.

a prince amongst men, reigning easily without a rival, like Saul among the Israelites, the head and shoulders above others. He was the very model of the finished Christian gentleman. In all the relations of private life, he was an example of the believers—a most affectionate husband, a tender father, a firm friend, a judicious counsellor. Given to hospitality, his acquaintance was large, his society was courted, and he had an extensive correspondence with many on both sides of the Atlantic. In the pulpit he was peculiarly solemn and impressive. The doctrines of free grace were declared with all fidelity and much unction. There was no tinsel or meretricious adornment, but solid instruction and weighty sentiment, the manifest result of much study. The scientific cast of his mind enabled him to express his thoughts in language at once logically precise, appropriate, chaste, and elegant. Clearly apprehending both doctrine and duty himself, with the bearing of the one upon the other, he set them forth plainly and forcibly before his auditory, urging them home to the heart and conscience in measured accents and distinct utterance. A discourse from him was no exemplification of laboured dexterity in mere word-building; not a bushel of chaff, in which one would have to search long and hard to find a grain of wheat. Rather was it a bushel of rich grain in which the labour and the search would be to find a single particle of chaff. Never, perhaps, was there one to whom the well-known lines of Cowper could have a more strikingly just application :—

"Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master strokes, and draw from his design:
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men."

One would almost think that Dr. Stavely had sat for the picture. While sitting under such a ministry from Sabbath to Sabbath, if, in any instance, edification was not the result, the fault must surely have rested with the hearer, and not with the preacher.

Sincerely attached to the principles and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, he did not shun the exposition and application of them when occasion seemed to require. One possessed of his accomplishments natural and acquired, had he chosen a different profession, or had he even entered the ministry of some other connection, might easily have raised his prospects for this world very much higher. But having, on deliberate and conscientious conviction, cast his lot with the Covenanters, and decided on exercising his ministry amongst them, he never after repented of his choice, notwithstanding the privations which it necessarily involved. Yet his was no narrow and sectarian spirit that would coop itself up within the limits of its own denomination, and refuse the practical recognition of any excellence lying beyond. He acknowledged and rejoiced in the universal brotherhood of believers in Jesus. When another appeared in the field, engaged in fighting the good fight of faith, though his uniform might be somewhat different from his own, and though it was under a banner somewhat different from that which he followed, he could salute him as a fellow-soldier in the one great sacramental host of the Divine Captain of the common salvation. He made himself versant with the various movements in the world abroad, that he might have understanding of the times, and sound a seasonable trumpet-note of warning as to what Israel ought to do; and he was ever ready and willing to co-operate with brethren of other denominations, in any scheme of piety and benevolence, when this could be done without the compromise or abandonment, to any extent, of our peculiar position. This trait in his character, this large-hearted catholicity, was well-known and appreciated. A touching evidence of this was furnished on the day of his interment. I could not but note with great satisfaction the

numbers of brother ministers belonging to another section of the Church of Christ, some of them from considerable distances, who joined in the funeral procession, and in paying the last sad offices of respect to the remains of departed worth. And, I think, it is but an act of simple justice to those servants of our common Lord gratefully to make this public mention of it.

In the Church courts, as everywhere else, our beloved father occupied a conspicuous and influential position. There his presence and counsel will long be missed. Though he might not speak so frequently as others, yet when he did express an opinion, it was well weighed and judicious, and very often had the effect of settling whatever might be the point under discussion. Ever a lover of peace, and of the things that make for peace, he yet loved the truth more. In that lamentable controversy, which agitated our Church for many years, issuing in the separation of one Presbytery from the rest, and the erection of a new denomination, in 1840, he exerted all his powers to throw oil upon the troubled waters, and to prevent a breach of the brotherly covenant. But when all these efforts were unavailing, and the breach was at last effected, he had not his decision to form. He had not the remotest idea of making common cause or meddling further with those who seemed given to change.

Of the deep personal piety of the subject of our sketch, who could doubt, who witnessed his blameless walk and conversation for more than half-a-century. True, his piety had nothing of the Pharisaic cast, cleansing only the outside of the cup and platter; busying itself with the mere letter of rite and ceremony; tithing the mint, anise, and cummin, while neglecting the weightier matters of the law; sounding a trumpet before it; praying ostentatiously at the corners of the streets, as if addressing the challenge to all passers by—Behold how godly I am. It was no puling, sentimental thing, feeding on human recognition, and the fickle applause of fellow-mortals, but languishing and dying if these be withheld: no sickly plant, requiring the constant

glare of a tropical sun to make it vegetate; otherwise, dwarfed and stunted, and ready to vanish from the face of the earth. No, it was of a healthier, manlier, truer type; a sturdy plant that had struck its roots deep down into the clefts of the Rock of Ages, and derived all its nourishment and stability thence; that towered aloft, spread abroad its branches, and throve alike in storm and calm, in sunshine and in shade; as the palm tree to which the writer of the 92nd Psalm compares the righteous, still bringing forth fruit even in old age, fat and flourishing. How often in these later years, when second childhood was growing upon him, has he been overheard engaged in preaching the Gospel to an imaginary audience, or administering sealing ordinances to fancied recipients! How often has he buttoned his coat about him, and with staff in hand set out professedly to visit some distant portion of his flock! And when sometimes indulged in this a mile or two for the sake of exercise, it was frequently no easy task to induce him to retrace his steps. This showed unmistakably the heart-love he had to his work. There is a peculiar interest attaching to some fine old ruin; it may be some old baronial castle, or some grand old cathedral. As the external eye follows the flowing lines, scans the delicate geometrical tracery, marks the proportion and the symmetry, comprehends the design of the master architect that planned it, it rises up before the mind's eye in all its pristine completeness, a thing of beauty and of lofty magnificence. Associations cluster around it, like the ivy that clings to its mouldering walls. Imagination goes to work. What scenes of festive gaiety, of wealth and splendour, have those halls, now silent and deserted, of that old palatial mansion witnessed, when the princely owner dispensed his princely hospitalities to his assembled guests, when strains of sweetest music greeted the ear, and beauty lent her charms, and genius, and talent, and wit, and learning congregated at his invitation to render their homage and grace his board! Here was the feast of reason and the flow of soul. What crowds of devout worshippers have frequented the nave, now roofless and grass-grown, of

that old minster! What earnest prayers and jubilant hymns of praise have been wafted to heaven from those long-drawn aisles, and fretted vaults, now crumbling to dust, under the ceaseless and relentless gnawings of time's tooth! It was with some such feelings as these I looked upon our aged father on occasion of a visit I paid to him after his retirement from the discharge of active duties. And I would have esteemed it a blessed privilege to make many such visits, had local distance and other calls of duty permitted. I found the outward man not so much altered; but the recollection was greatly gone, and the once vigorous intellect was in a state of sad decadence. It was a ruin, indeed, but a grand old ruin, with much, very much, to remind of what it had been. There was one incident of that visit which I cannot withhold, touchingly illustrating, as it does, the point in hand. I was accompanied by a near relative, who, like myself, had been brought up under his ministry, and who had ever been accustomed to look up to him with feelings of profound love and veneration as a friend, pastor, and father in the Lord. I know that these feelings were reciprocated by a large measure of personal regard. Something of this appeared even then to be operating in his mind; for, after I had prayed with the family, and we were about to take leave, he moved towards the chair on which she was sitting, laid his hand upon her head, and addressed her, at first in a strain of earnest religious exhortation, but it speedily turned into an equally earnest prayer. I stood by in silent wonder and admiration. And here was what elicited the wonder. Though at other times there was wandering and incoherence, now there was nothing of the kind. The sentences followed each other in regular connexion. There was the same appropriateness of conception and of diction as had ever characterized him, even in his best days. The current of his thoughts seemed here to have found its proper channel. His faculties, losing themselves on other subjects, were here collected; wandering abroad on common topics here at home. When I looked, that calm Summer's afternoon, on

that venerable man—the frame somewhat shrunk and attenuated, but still erect and stately—the flowing silvery locks, a veritable crown of glory to him thus found in the way of righteousness: when I listened to the tones of his once rich and well-modulated voice, now weakened by age, but still retaining much of the former mellowness, as he thus talked and pleaded with his Maker. Oh! it was a scene calculated to stir emotion to its lowest depths, and it did. I could fancy ministering angels gazing on it with delight. It was a scene that appeared more akin to heaven than earth; in which we seemed to accompany that venerable servant of Christ to the very vestibule of the upper sanctuary—a scene I shall never forget, while memory serves, and reason holds her seat. The inference is plain. Here was an undoubted instance of, I may not perhaps say, the ruling passion, but the master habit of the life, strong in death—aye, even in death; for, was he not dying gradually before our eyes for the last five or six years? The conclusion was irresistible. We were in the presence of one whose whole course through the world had been a life-long course of walking with his God. I am informed, indeed, that during those latter years, when dead to the world and to the things of time and sense, he could, connectedly, and without a single mistake, engage in conducting domestic worship; praying with particularity for the members of the family, the elders, the congregation, and others. Immediately before his dissolution, there was a gleam of returning consciousness. He recognized each of his own children, and the other friends assembled at his bedside. To one of the servants, who had waited on him, he said, with all his wonted suavity and kindly consideration for the feelings of others, "I am grateful." He laid his hands on all, and gave them his blessing. Thus the close was beautifully in keeping with the even tenor of his whole life. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." And now that he has gone to his reward; that we shall see his face, and hear his voice no more on earth, it may seem to some the fond and partial

estimate of one who is only delighted to have this public opportunity to acknowledge his obligations to him; and who, if he has any clear views in respect to Christian faith and practice, ascribes it in great measure, under God, to having sat at his feet, and having grown up listening from Sabbath to Sabbath to his lucid expositions of divinely revealed truth, nevertheless the conviction is strong, and I must express it; "Take him for all in all, we ne'er shall look upon his like again." A stranger might deem the eulogium exaggerated. But I address myself to those who have known him most intimately, who have seen his going out and coming in, and had the best opportunities of remarking the beautiful, Christ-like consistency of his long life. I speak to men of intelligence and discriminating judgment. Say—I can trust your verdict—have I overdrawn the picture in the least? have I dipped my brush in one whit too glowing colours? The call in Providence is loud to you, my beloved brethren—"Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

II. The call is to *know* this, to know it, not as a bare fact, a matter of simple information merely, but to see and acknowledge aright the hand and working of Jehovah in it. Let us then, in the second place, meditate for a little on the Providence of God in the removal of His eminent servants from their spheres of duty on earth.

His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways. Who is like Him, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? His judgments are a great deep. His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. His providential dispensations are inscrutable. He giveth not account of any of His matters. What we cannot comprehend, we are yet bound to believe; where we cannot perceive, to trust. We must learn to walk by faith, not by sight. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? The doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah is very distasteful to some minds. They find no satisfaction in contemplating it. What would they have? Would they have all at their own disposal?

Or, would they prefer to think that all depended on contingencies or blind chance? Whether acknowledged or not, it is the fact, that the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of His heart, to all generations: and there would be greatly more wisdom, yea, and comfort too, in accepting the fact to the fullest extent than in refusing to admit it; for who hath hardened himself against Almighty God, and hath prospered? Surely there ought to be immensely more satisfaction to an intelligent mind in the thought, that all is ordered by One who is infinite in wisdom, as He is in power. There let the troubled soul, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; harrassed by fightings without, it may be, and fears within, seek and find rest. An infinitely wise Father controls and guides all to the final issue. Jacob, on one occasion, exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul to some of his sons—"Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Yet all were tending, under the wonder-working providence of the Most High, to a very happy result. The word of inspiration assures us that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose;" and He will most certainly accomplish, in perfect faithfulness, every word He has put upon record.

It was one of the sayings of him whose departure we this day lament, a saying often presented by way of inference from other doctrinal statements, that "God has an end worthy of Himself in all that He does." He had, no doubt, deeply pondered the lesson in his own heart. He had felt its weight and importance. He had learned from experience its inestimable value in imparting consolation and hope. And so he set himself to inculcate it upon others. Sometimes it is hard for flesh and blood to see and read aright the lesson. Rather is it believing. Sometimes an eminent minister of Christ, like the sainted M'Cheyne and many others we might name, is cut down in the very flower of his age and in the midst of his use-

fulness. It might then appear to short-sighted mortals as if God were destroying His own work, pulling down what He had built up. Yet He has doubtless ends worthy of Himself. He would teach us much, unless we are very dull in learning. He would have us to regard Himself supremely. He would have us remember—Man is mortal; God ever lives and reigns: Man is but the instrument; God, the universal efficient Agent, the great First Cause and Last End of all things. The work is His own. He will carry it on, and find for Himself the most fitting instruments. If we rest in the instrument, and do not look beyond; if we idolize it, and do not give to God all the glory, as is due, then may we expect that the idol will be somehow speedily brought down to the dust. Or, it may be, the instrument is not prized as it should be. It is scorned, neglected, and despised. The message is heard with carelessness and indifference, and the messenger treated with contempt. We are not concerned to profit as we ought by the ministration. In such a case, God would teach us the value of that which we thought lightly of by removing it for ever from our view, like many other things—health, for instance—for which we are never sufficiently grateful until we are brought to feel their value by the want of them. In these ways the death of an eminent servant of the Lord may be in itself a sermon fully as impressive and instructive as any he ever preached in life, or might have preached, had his life been prolonged to the utmost limit. Sometimes, again, an eminent man, like him of whom we speak to-day, has his years lengthened out beyond the age of active public usefulness. But his living presence, were it nothing more, should have the effect of vividly recalling previous instructions; and the associations it calls up must ever have, to the well-regulated mind, a beneficial tendency. Thus we may be able to trace a portion of God's ways. But whether able to trace them or not, in whole or in part, let us rest assured, GOD HAS AN END WORTHY OF HIMSELF IN ALL THAT HE DOES.

Let us note, further, the infinite *benevolence* of God in the matter, equally with His power and wisdom. The

great business of man on earth, so far as the individual is concerned, is to make sure of an interest in Christ and His salvation, and thus stand prepared for eternity; for what is a man profited, though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? A long life is not necessary for this, though it may be for accomplishing other Divine purposes. This world is not the place of our rest; nor would it be desirable to remain here for ever, subject to infirmity, surrounded and affected by sin and manifold evils. God gives His servants a measure of peace, comfort, and joy, in believing, and in doing His will; a foretaste and earnest of their future reward. He then, in His own time and manner, takes them home to the enjoyment of Himself in the mansions of everlasting glory. He gives them an eternal gracious reward. But He leaves not Himself without witnesses. Provision is made for a constant succession of such. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth."* A right noble lineage was that of him whom we this day mourn. The father was a prince in Israel. Of the son we have been speaking more particularly. And now the grand-son is a respected and honoured missionary minister of our Church on the shores of a far-distant dependency of the British empire.† "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." It is matter for congratulation, moreover, to this congregation, that, when your late pastor was disabled by the infirmities of old age, you were not left without one to break the Bread of Life amongst you. God, in His gracious providence, sent you one who, though young in years and in office, has already proved himself to be a workman not needing to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;

* Ps. cx. 3. Such is the idea to be attached to the last clause of this verse, according to the most reliable exposition. *Vid. Alexander on the Psalms in loco*

† The Rev. Alexander M'Leod Stavely, of St. John, New Brunswick.

one resembling wonderfully your late pastor in many important characteristics, whom the prophet's mantle, ere yet he had ascended, seems largely to have enwrapped. May a double portion of the father's spirit descend upon his successor in office.

III. Let us now endeavour to make some more directly practical use of our subject. Suffer, dear brethren, the word of exhortation.

1. Give glory to God. Be grateful to Him who spared His servant so long, to minister to you in holy things : who bestowed upon him such gifts ; gave him such acceptance, such a large measure of mental and corporeal health and strength, and as we trust His blessing upon his labours. It is a remarkable fact, one that has perhaps few parallels, and well worthy of being put upon record, that, in his whole ministry of more than fifty years, he was never a Sabbath without being occupied in preaching, unless on two occasions, once after the death of his eldest son, and once by some mistake about appointments. The blessing of a faithful ministry cannot be too highly appreciated. You in this corner of the vineyard have been highly favoured. Your eyes have seen your teachers. Here M'Kinny, a man of most comprehensive intellect and powerful grasp of thought, whose mental capabilities and acquirements towered far above mediocrity, once laboured. He had a worthy successor in Dr. Stavely. It has been observed of some congregations that have enjoyed a succession of able, pious, and faithful ministers, that though they grew, as might be expected under such, in knowledge, they did not appear to grow correspondingly in grace. Their information on religious subjects was extensive, but personal piety, somehow, fell to a low ebb amongst them. As one expressed it, they were "preached to death." I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. Indeed, I have good reason to know it is not so here. Nevertheless, the caution is never out of place, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

2. Cherish in your recollection the instructions, warnings, and exhortations you have received from him who has been so recently removed from amongst you; and this all the more from the consideration that you shall never see his face, nor hear his voice, again in this world. Let the lessons of wisdom he has imparted to you be treasured in your memory, and frequently recalled. Teach them diligently to your children. Talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. I take you to witness this day, that he has faithfully and lovingly declared unto you the whole counsel of God for your salvation, keeping nothing back. And now, if any soul is lost through neglect of his admonitions, this house, these walls, and beams, and very stones, that have so often echoed back his truthful words, will rise up and cry out against you in the judgment of the great day.

3. Let his godly example be imitated. Be ye not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. But remember, there is only one unsinning and all-perfect example. All earthly examples are imperfect. Be ye followers of such, then, as they also are of Christ. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It might be supposed, from the sketch I have given of the life and character of our departed father, that I had described him as perfectly faultless and without sin. Such was not my intention. No one would have repudiated the idea more strenuously and indignantly than the subject of our sketch. None would have more humbly confessed himself a sinner saved by grace. But I have presented only the excellent and the praiseworthy. I believe it is a good motto to be noted on, *Nil nisi bonum de mortuis*—say nothing but good of the dead. A shrewd judge of human nature, and observer of men and things, has written—

> "The evil that men do lives after them:
> The good is oft interred with their bones."

In one sense, the first part of this is always true. If men do evil, the deed cannot be recalled, and the consequences will be far-reaching, running through all time, and extending to eternity itself. But this is true of the good as well as of the evil. Rather, therefore, are we to understand the poet as speaking of the practical uses which are made of the evil and the good. The good is forgotten, and only the evil remembered. And we are to understand him, moreover, describing the actual state of things as he finds it—illustrating the *quid est*, not the *quid oportet*—setting before us what generally is, not what ought to be. But it is a safe rule for the Christian most frequently, to reverse the maxims and practices of the world. Be it ours, then, to cherish the memory of all that was true, venerable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, in the life and character of the great and good, when they are gone, and to follow them in these. And, as to the evil, if we have seen any in them or done by them; as to the infirmity, the defect, the foible, the sin, let us imitate God Himself in regard to that, and bury it in eternal oblivion. Be ye followers, I repeat, of such, but only as they were of Christ. Look to the all-perfect example. Your late pastor was assiduous in pointing you to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. He preached the doctrine of the Crucified One in all its freeness, and fulness, and breadth of practical application; not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

And here I may most appositely remind you of another of those weighty utterances of his, a statement he often made in your hearing, but not by one single time too frequently, when its signification and importance are duly considered—the statement, namely, "Christ is the way, and holiness is the walking in that way." Yes, Christ is the way to the sinner's reconciliation with his God, the way to peace, comfort, happiness, and heaven. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." "Neither is there

salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The great Gospel command is, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and the promise annexed to it is, that believing ye shall be saved. Salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." On the other hand, holiness is absolutely requisite. The command runs, "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Without holiness no one is fitted for the companionship or enjoyment of heaven. No holiness, no happiness. Nothing defiled or defiling, nothing unclean, can enter the New Jerusalem. The unholy are for ever debarred from crossing the threshold of the gate of the celestial city. But how is the sinner to acquire this necessary holiness? Only through union to Christ, and communion with Him. The Holy Spirit takes of Christ's, and shows it to the soul with regenerating and sanctifying power. He works faith, and thus unites to Christ; and from this union springs conformity to His blessed image. It is a mistake touching a fundamental point, to separate faith and holiness. Faith is the fountain, holiness the stream. Faith is the radical grace. Or, rather, Christ Himself is the root; holiness the fruit that grows on the trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah's own right hand, that He may be glorified. Without union to the living Saviour, there can be no access to God, or walking with Him, and so no restoration of His lost image in the soul. The great living Head operates by His Holy Spirit in the members of His mystical body, working in them mightily both to will and to do, and thus are they enabled to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; giving all diligence in making their calling and election sure. All the motives to holiness are drawn from the

believing contemplation of Christ in the glory and fulness of His Person and Mediatorial work. The love of Christ constrains. Faith works by love and purifies the heart. That cannot be a true faith which does not issue in holiness. That cannot be a true holiness which is not prompted and guided by faith. Union to Christ, and communion with Him as founded on that union, were themes on which our departed father delighted to descant. Take, then, with you this saying. It is expressed with his customary precision of idea and language. It is brief and easily remembered. And it is worthy of being printed in letters of gold, and worn as a frontlet between your eyes, and written on your door posts and gates :—CHRIST IS THE WAY, AND HOLINESS IS THE WALKING IN THAT WAY.

4. Finally, brethren, let us hear the call once more loudly addressed to us in the providence of the Most High —"Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Delay not the concerns of the soul. Boast not of to-morrow; for ye know not what a day may bring forth. Life is most uncertain, but death is sure; and then the state is irrevocably fixed in happiness or misery for eternity. It is appointed to all men once to die; and, after death, the judgment. Time flies. Each day brings us a step nearer to the last. Be concerned to have your interest in Christ secured—your title to the incorruptible inheritance clear. Redeem the time. Try to make the most of privilege and opportunity, in a diligent and prayerful spirit. Work while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Death! 'Tis a solemn, awful sound, harsh and grating to the ear of sense, like the shovel-full of earth and pebbles rattling on the coffin-lid, when the dust is consigned to its kindred dust, sending a shudder creeping through the flesh, a chill to the bones of survivors who stand around the open yawning grave. But let us look beyond. There is a

brighter side to the picture. *Mors janua vitae*: death is the gate of life. There are strains of heavenly music that should drown the voice of sadness and sorrow. It is only those who are destitute of a saving hope in Christ that need be all their life-time subject to bondage through fear of death. Christ is the death of death. To them that have saving union to Him, death is swallowed up of victory.

> "Grace! 'tis a charming sound—
> Harmonious to the ear:
> Heaven with the echoes shall resound;
> And all the world shall hear."

And to those whose hearts the Divine Spirit has touched, so as to make them pulsate in symphony with that charming sound, there is hope held forth full of glory. The songs of earth, in which we have to sing of judgment as well as mercy, shall be exchanged for the song of angels, and of redeemed saints, eternally new, and of unmingled triumph —"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." It is but a little while to work and suffer, and then we enter those blessed precincts where God shall wipe away all tears from the eye, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

Oh, what a rapturous meeting and mutual recognition, when parent and child, and husband and wife, and brother and sister, and those whose affections have been intertwined on earth, shall assemble in everlasting re-union; when the spiritual father shall welcome home to glory his spiritual children, and they shall reciprocate the unspeakable joy! It is thus that I hope, through grace, to meet our beloved friend and father now removed, with other loved ones, not lost, but gone before. And I charge you all, without exception, that you meet us there, at the right hand of the Judge on the great white throne, and that none be missing. That we may all thus meet at last, may God, of His infinite goodness, grant; and to His name be the glory for ever! Amen.